

Imlay Mansion
Allentown, Monmouth County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

Imlay Mansion
Allentown, Monmouth County, New Jersey

Owner: Miss Mary Emma Gordon

Date of Erection: About 1790

Architect:

Builder: John Imlay

Present Condition: Excellent

Number of Stories: Two and one-half

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone below
ground, brick, Flemish
bond, above ground

Exterior walls - beaded
siding, front matched,
rest of varying width

Interior walls - plaster,
wainscot sill high in
most important rooms;
stairway - perfect design
of rail and baluster with
an unusual scroll-saw
ornament under each tread;
eleven of the fifteen rooms
have open fireplaces each
with a different designed
mantel

Floor - random width

Roof - slate over shingles

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Historical Data:

The original owner of this house spent his youth at Allentown. Later on he entered the shipping business at Philadelphia and his firm, Imlay and Tuthill, enjoyed a prosperous West Indies trade. Having amassed a considerable fortune Imlay repaired to Allentown in 1787 and there along the Old Yorke Road, which led from Philadelphia to New York by way of Perth Amboy, he built the house that bears his name about 1790. The land upon which it was built is described in an old record marked: "Essay of a Plan of Lots late Thomas Fawrie in Allentown lately sold to John Imlay by James and Drinker on September 14, 1782."

The property passed from John Imlay to William Imlay. John Imlay's will indicates how much value was placed on the property:

"Item 10th. I give and bequeath unto my said son William all of that my mansion house where I now reside with the lot whereon it stands containing about two acres of land to extend as far back as a quince tree standing on said lot and to the same width in the rear as it is on said street which I value to him in his legacy at three thousand pounds for and during the term of his natural life....."

From 1813 until 1880 the property remained in the hands of William. Upon his death in 1880 the property went to his daughter Mrs. Jonathan Fisk. When Mrs. Fisk died Miss Mary Emma Gordon, a grandniece of Mrs. William Imlay, purchased the house. She has in her

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possession most of the original furnishings of the house.

Except for the wall paper and a small porch which has been added to the kitchen wing, the house remains today practically unchanged and in a perfect state of preservation. The wall paper on the parlor, an imported Lewis XVI hand block classic design in a pattern of light garlands and small medallions displayed against a reddish background, was purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art for fifteen hundred dollars. The paper on the room above was sold to Henry Du Pont, of Wilmington, Delaware, for twelve hundred dollars. According to a Bill of Sale dated April 18, 1794, now in the Metropolitan Museum, the paper was purchased for sixty-five dollars from Poyntett of Philadelphia.

All the wood in the house went through a seasoning in kilns specially built for the purpose by the owner. It has survived without warping. The stair rail and its supports are of solid mahogany and took six months to make.

A wing of the house, which was at one time used by John Imlay as an office, was once occupied by William A. Newell, Governor of New Jersey, 1856-1859, and Governor of Washington Territory, 1880-1884. He was also at one time Congressman of New Jersey and was responsible for establishing the United States Life Saving Service.

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Walter C. Ruff
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, A.I.A.
District Officer

Rev. Aug. 20, '36 T.T.W.